

# Wildland Fire Safety

Office of the  
State Fire Marshal  
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars.htm>



*Protect your home from a wildland fire by taking these important steps:*

1

**Choose a safe building location --** If you are having a house built for you, check the plans for some fire protection basics. Here are some tips to keep in mind regarding the location of your home on the property.

- ☐ Your home should be built on the most level portion of the land. Fire spreads rapidly, even on minor slopes. Your home should not be near any features of the property which might channel the flow of the wind.
- ☐ Make sure your single story home is set back at least 30 feet from a ridge or cliff. Otherwise, you house could be hit directly by flames and heat moving up the sides of the ridge.
- ☐ Make certain the driveway is well-marked and wide enough for fire engines to have easy access – 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet. Make sure there is a turnaround at the house, and that your road is clearly marked.

2

**Design and build firewise structures --** Bring your ideas to your architect or contractor to create a design that is both aesthetically pleasing and offers many of the elements that can protect your home from a fire.

- ☐ **Roof** – Use non-combustible or fire-resistant roofing materials such as Class-A asphalt shingles, metal, cement and concrete products, or terra-cotta tiles. There are even products that resemble the look of wood shakes.
- ☐ **Exterior Siding** – Exterior wall cladding should be made of fire-resistive materials. Some exterior siding materials, such as vinyl, soften and melt. This can expose internal wall components to ignition from heat, and give fire a direct route into your home. Materials such as stucco or masonry stand up better under heat and exposure.
- ☐ **Windows** – Double pane windows with the air space in between the two pieces of glass fare somewhat better than single pane window. But, tempered glass is the wiser choice – it outperforms plate glass and is especially useful in larger applications such as picture window.
- ☐ **Skylights can also be a potential entry point for fire.** Plastic skylights can melt under the intense heat and flying embers. Cover windows and skylights with non-flammable screening and shutters.
- ☐ **Vents** – Cover your exterior attic and under-floor vents with wire mesh no larger than 1/8 inch to prevent sparks from being drawn into your home. Under-eave soffit vents should be closer to the roofline rather than the wall, to prevent heat or flames from having a direct routine into the attic spaces.
- ☐ **Additional Structures** – Keep in mind that patios, fencing and trellis' can lead a fire to your home. Don't attach the fence to your home. Consider adding a stone or concrete pillar at the end closest to the house.

### 3

**Stay on Guard with Firewise landscaping and maintenance --** It is here in the yard that your house can make its first, best stand against a wildfire . With vigilant landscaping and maintenance, you can keep a fire from getting near to the house itself.

- ☐ Remove things that can burn easily. For example, move firewood and clear dead and dense vegetation, from at least 30 feet from around the house. When planting, choose plants with a high moisture content. They are more fire resistive than others, creating a fire break around your home.
- ☐ Trees and shrubs are fine too, if well-spaced, watered and properly pruned. Remove dead or low-hanging branches, and keep control of the height and spread of ground covering vegetation.
- ☐ It is important to make sure there are no tree limbs around your chimney or dead branches that hanging over your roof. And, keep an eye on any limbs that may come in contact with power lines.
- ☐ Keep your gutters, eaves and roof clear of leaves or other debris.
- ☐ Finally, make an occasional inspection of your home. Look for deterioration, such as breaks and spaces between roof tiles, warping wood, or cracks and crevices in the structure, where sparks might find a way in.

**Reference:** <http://www.firewise.org>